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Letter from Vincentian Family: March 7, 2000

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March 7, 2000

To the members of the Vincentian Family throughout the world

Our very dear brothers and sisters,

In Rome, on February 3-5, 2000, those responsible for various branches of the Vincentian Family came together for their sixth formal meeting. The following representatives of the various groups, listed in the order of foundation, took part: for AIC (1617) — Patricia Palacios de Nava (President), Anna Rovetta, and Rosamaría Casas; for the Congregation of the Mission (1625) — Robert Maloney (Superior General) and Benjamín Romo; for the Daughters of Charity (1633) — Sr. Juana Elizondo (Superior General) and Sr. Therezinha Remonato; for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (1833) — José Ramón Díaz Torremocha (President), Joseph Mueller, Erich Schmitz, Pierre Bonnassies and Juan Tirado; for the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul (1845) — Yvon Laroche (Superior General) and Tito Marega; for the Vincentian Marian Youth (1847) — Edurne Urdampilleta (Provisional President); for the Association of the Miraculous Medal (1905) — Charles Shelby; for MISEVI (1999) — Marcos Amador.

At the beginning of the meeting each group shared with everyone an account of its principal activities during the past year and a projection of those for the coming Jubilee year. Of particular importance during the year 2000 will be the First General Assembly of our Vincentian Marian Youth (JMV). Elected representatives from about 40 countries will come to Rome, on August 8-12, to take part. Almost immediately after that, on August 15-20, about 2500 Vincentian young people will participate in World Youth Day here in Rome. Of course, feeding them and lodging them will be an enormous undertaking!

Together, we evaluated several Vincentian Family activities in 1999. By all accounts the annual day of prayer of the Vincentian Family, held in 130 countries around the time of the feast of St. Vincent, received very positive comments. All branches take part. There has been an increasing participation of the poor. A number of countries have used this gathering as an occasion for the ongoing formation of the members. We also assessed our efforts at acting in solidarity with the poor in emergency situations (e.g., in response to natural disasters as in Turkey, Taiwan, and Venezuela, as well as in situations of violence as in Kosovo and East Timor). Through the use of Internet we have been able to disseminate information quickly, gather funds and material goods, and channel these to disaster areas. Within those areas, members of numerous branches of the family have been able to work together. We evaluated too the Jubilee 2000 Declaration on Behalf of the Poor. We found that the process of

preparing the Declaration worked smoothly thanks to the coordinating efforts of Fr. Shelby. We judged that the distribution process can still be improved.

A book on Vincentian spirituality for lay men and women is being prepared by Fr. John Prager. We envision that it will be ready this year. We discussed ways of distributing this book so that it reaches the grassroots.

Fr. Elmer Bauer, Treasurer General of the Congregation of the Mission, made a very interesting presentation about the web page of the Vincentian Family, projecting it and explaining it while online. Each group agreed to send a representative to a two-day meeting (June 30-July 1, 2000) of the persons who will be responsible for the web site of each branch.

Since this was the first meeting in which an official representative from MISEVI participated, we talked about the new International Statutes, approved on April 7, 1999, as well as about how MISEVI functions in the concrete. It provides a program for preparing lay missionaries, finding them an apostolic placement in a foreign country, as well as a community setting, offering them spiritual, moral, and financial support during their time in that country, and providing for their smooth reintegration into their home country upon their return. Several countries have recently manifested interest in setting up national MISEVI groups.

We discussed various instruments for the ongoing formation of the *asesores* (spiritual directors, animators, councillors, etc.) of our Vincentian lay groups. AIC has already published a very rich document on this theme. During the General Assembly of the JMV, a session will be held for the various *asesores* who will be accompanying the young people. In Paris in July 2002 we will hold a Vincentian Month on this theme.

We decided to establish a “virtual” commission, which will meet only by e-mail or over Internet, to help coordinate the various activities of the Vincentian Family. Each branch will name a member of this commission. Its purpose will be to exchange information, concerns, and suggestions with a view toward improving our common activities, especially the service of the poor and the formation of our members.

We discussed the possibility, for the future, of composing a book of prayer for the Vincentian Family, including prayers of St. Vincent himself, modern Vincentian prayers, Vincentian hymns, suggestions for meditating in the spirit of St. Vincent, etc.

We talked at some length about the members of our family who are teaching in continental China and about how positive their experience there has been, especially their contacts with young people. The heads of our various groups will see if members of their branches are interested in volunteering.

We spoke about various programs for the ongoing formation of the lay members of our Vincentian Family in diverse countries. The results of several of these programs have been very positive. A pilot program in Italy has met difficulties.

Besides all the matters on the agenda, we spent much time in informal discussion since we had a full three days together, sharing prayer, meals, and each other's company. The evaluation of the meeting was very positive. We set the dates for our next formal meeting which will be held on February 9-11, 2001. Actually, since there are many common activities during this Jubilee Year, we will see one another somewhat frequently in the meantime.

In our prayer during these three days, we often thought of all the members of our family. Together, we asked the Lord to strengthen the bonds that unite us, with our diverse charisms, so that we might in this Jubilee year help liberate the poor from their bonds.

Your brothers and sisters in St. Vincent,

Patricia Palacios de Nava
President , AIC (founded in 1617)

Yvon Laroche, rsv
Superior General, Religious of
St. Vincent de Paul (founded in 1845)

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General, Congregation of the
Mission (founded in 1625)

Eduardo Urdampilleta
Provisional President, Vincentian
Marian Youth (founded in 1847)

Sr. Juana Elizondo, D.C.
Superior General, Daughters of
Charity (founded in 1633)

Charles Shelby, C.M.
Miraculous Medal Association
(founded in 1905)

José Ramón Díaz Torremocha
President, St. Vincent de Paul
Society (founded in 1833)

Marcos Amador
MISEVI (founded in 1999)